2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

176 721 Incidents like the above continued unabated throughout the century. In 1820 a general Treaty of Peace was signed, which included the submission of Sultan-bin-Saqr, Sheikh of Sharjah (who, on leaving the hospitality afforded him by the Sultan of Muscat, apparently took to piracy as a quick means of recovering his lost fortunes), and the Sheikhs of Dubai, Ras-al-Khaimah, Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi. Piracy abated somewhat in the next ten years, but in 1850 we hear of further attacks on British merchant ships, and depredations on shipping continued, in spite of severe reprisals and fines, until the end of the century.

It was the appearance of the steamship, with its greater speed, independence of winds, and heavier gun power, which really brought piracy to a close. The Arabs realized that it was suicide to attempt to pit their wooden ships and boats against modern sea power, and the few who stuck to piracy confined their attacks to smaller, unarmed sailing ships.

The establishment of order at sea was necessarily a gradual process, but by 1890 piracy had ceased to be a popular profession. There were sporadic outbreaks in the last few years of the century, and as late as 1905 a British merchant vessel was attacked. But the Wahabi influence had long been broken, the fight against iron-clad men-o'-war was unequal, and the old piratical tribes settled down once more to the safer occupation of fishing and pearl-diving.

Piracy is dead in the Persian Gulf, although isolated attacks on dhows still occur. As recently as 1944 a large Arab dhow, containing food supplies on its way to Dubai, was attacked by a native sailing ship and the crew murdered. The matter was immediately reported to the Political Officer, Captain Bird, who ascertained that the pirates came from a village on the Persian side of the Gulf, near Jask. Representations were made to the Iran Government, and it is believed that the culprits were apprehended and hanged, suitable compensation being paid to the dependents of the victims. To-day piracy is frowned upon by all sections of the community; even the sheikhs consider it is no longer respectable.

[433] 396 501 Fishing and pearling have replaced the more violent forms of sea traffic, and shipbuilding remains an important industry on the Trucial Coast. The war has held up supplies of timber and sail-cloth, which came from India, but several large boats have been built from stocks of old material. The largest dhows, which sometimes sail as far south as South Africa and can easily make the passage

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

to India, are about two hundred feet long and of several hundred tons. They have a high poop deck and a lofty covered gallery at the stern, which give them the appearance of galleons; in fact, they are said to owe their design to the Portuguese vessels which sailed these waters in the seventeenth century.

The timbers are caulked with glue and lime and the highly polished hulk is preserved with shark's oil. Oars are used to manœuvre the vessels when in shallow water, and these sometimes attain a length of nearly thirty feet and require half a dozen men to handle them. To witness the pearling fleet as it sets out at sunset for the pearling beds, at the beginning of the season, is an experience long remembered; the sky is radiant with purple and gold, and the silhouettes of the sails, like bats' wings, dance on the sparkling sea. It is a picture suggestive of peace, but to the foreigner of a hundred years ago those sails must have been symbols of menace.

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

dates, ground nuts, spices and ghee butter. One shop was devoted entirely to hubble-bubble pipes and we watched an old Arab carving a pipe stem. The stems, which are of bamboo, are fitted with a brass ring near the top to form a lip for the smoker, the body of the stem being delicately covered with gold and silver thread. The second stem, through which the air escapes, is of plain bamboo, engraved with Arabic designs which are carved with a red-hot knife, and then coloured with indigo. The bowl, made of unglazed pottery, has a slender neck flared at the top. These pipes cost about ten rupees each, the stems being a rupee extra.

Some of the shops are well stocked with canned goods and haberdashery from the Indian market, and one saw shelves full of sewing cotton, buttons, metal polish, brass lamps, and cheap cloth. A common sight is raw cotton, still in its pods, which is gathered from trees in the interior; untreated hemp and tobacco leaves, crudely dried. There were few carpets, and those we saw were of indifferent quality. A few of the merchants appeared to be well-off and one or two had robes of coloured silk, edged with gold thread. They had noble, intelligent faces, and one patriarch, with a snow-white beard and spotless linen *abbas*, looked out of place in that ill-assorted crowd. A large sapphire ring sparkled on his finger and his long, thin hands were those of an artist. One must be careful not to judge the Arab by Western standards, since dirt and insanitation are not abhorrent to them as they are to us. Even a cultured and fastidious Arab may have manners which would be out of place in a London drawing-room.

Apart from little girls up to ten years of age, we saw very few women, and they were heavily veiled. We walked to the little quay, which was clustered with dhows and rowing boats and watched the intense activity of shipbuilding and repairing that was in progress. The seams of the hulls are caulked with raw cotton and then covered with pitch, and the bottoms are painted with lime mixed with shark's oil, a good preservative. The upper part of the hull, above the water line, is also varnished with fish oil. Some of the sails are enormous and stretch from bows to stern, giving the dhows great speed on the water. This is necessary since they have to cover great distances, especially in the pearling season, when they may have to sail seventy miles in a single day to reach the beds.

There was quite a chilly breeze as we entered a ferryboat and were rowed across the creek, although the sun was still high above

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

the horizon. It took about eight minutes to cross the creek, which is half a mile wide at this point, but the boats are heavy and clumsily made and the oars consist of rectangular boards nailed to a large pole. The boat was run on to the muddy, steep shore and we jumped out, picking our way amongst garbage and squatting Arabs.

The houses in Dubai Town, at the western and south side of the creek, are larger and more imposing than those in Dera; many of them have square towers and Persian ventilators, with verandas of Moorish design which lean dangerously away from the walls in cantilever fashion. The town is built upon the sides of a sloping hill, with a sandstone foundation, and the houses are curiously stepped or terraced; one walks along a road to find it is the roof of a house and, peering over the edge, sees another street below. The top of the hill is dominated by the sheikh's palace—a sandstone shell, no longer occupied, although the ruler's flag flies from the main tower. The Sheikh of Dubai lives in a walled house on the far side of the creek, overlooking the harbour and the sea.

The houses in the residential section of Dubai are large and clean, with high white walls and magnificent doorways of Moorish design. Some of the richer merchants' dwellings have small streets within their walls, with twisting alleys, steep flights of stone stairs and dark, cool rooms leading from the covered courtyards. One has the strange feeling in Dubai of being indoors all the time; this is because all the streets are roofed with palm-matting and one seldom sees the sky. It was rather like a visit to an Arab village at the British Exhibition in Wembley, except that this was the real thing, with all the aromas and colours of reality. Yet Dubai is remarkably clean for an Arab town, and some of the open booths and shops have first-class wares for sale. I have bought leather travelling bags here—made by native craftsmen—which were as handsome and well-made as anything at Fortnum & Mason's, and the Persian shops have stocks of modern and antique carpets which would please the most fastidious collector or decorator.

In one of the smaller houses on the highest terrace we found Mr. Jam Shan, the pearl merchant, who invited us into his dark and tiny sitting-room office. Both he and his sons wore shirts and trousers, smoked English cigarettes, and conversed in quite good Cockney, as they had spent many years in London. With the radio blaring an Indian song they sat bare-legged on the floor and resumed their work of sorting and counting the heap of pearls

TO 133 502 721 in two miles from their entrances. Thus it was that the pirate tribes were able to build their towns behind these natural booms, and to carry on their ruthless calling in defiance of the British and Portuguese navies — and to earn for their stronghold the much feared and romantic name, "The Pirate Coast".

TO 101 631 648 628 [527] Trucial 'Oman, as it is called today, is ruled by six independent sheikhs, bound under old treaties with Britain to maintain a maritime truce for the prevention of piracy and slave-trading. Family feuds and inter-tribal quarrelling are as common among them as are the rusty, ancient cannon. Many of the latter are no doubt from British men-o'-war, and some are still used for ceremonial occasions, a party afterwards being despatched to retrieve the cannon-balls.

TO 361 504 439 Unspoiled by time, Sharjah is one of the principal little towns, but it lacks the enchantment of Dibai, a picturesque centre a few miles along the coast to the west. A wide, shallow inlet divides Dibái and its waterfront of quaint little coffee-houses, and provides anchorage for dhows that bring transshipped goods from other continents. In the large market-place, spread on either side of the inlet and connected by a ferry-service of numerous little pole-propelled craft, the bedouin, with his henna-dyed beard and ancient rifle, can be seen fingering everything that is on show, from modern radio sets to ladies' lingerie, but he has little use for some of the strange products of the West.

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2: Codrai G-3 (1948-1950) 1950 MK1 Oman
Trucial Oman MK4

Coastal trade along the Persian Gulf has for centuries been carried on by dhows — graceful vessels with one huge lateen sail and usually a second lesser one on the mizzen mast; many dhows can now boast auxiliary engines.

The inlet dividing Dibai is thronged with small craft. In the background may be seen the distinctive Persian-designed wind-towers which convey any available breezes to the living quarters below.

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An ancient sail-maker plies his still more ancient craft according to an unchanged design. The probabilities are that some deep-sea dhow will rely on this sail to carry its cargo of dates to Southern Arabia, East Africa or the west coast of India.

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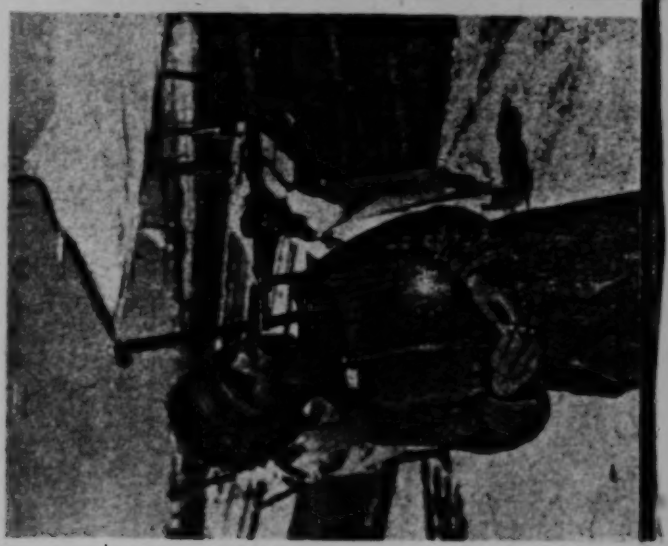

On the coast any unveiled woman is usually either a Negress or a Baluchi. Even this little girl (fascinated by an aeroplane) would probably be veiled if an Arab. The locket around her neck contains scraps from the Koran to protect her from evil spirits.

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